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## FACTS & FIGURES

The EU's humanitarian air service, ECHO Flight, has a **fleet of 6 aircraft**:

- 3 in DRC (also flying to Uganda)
- 1 in Kenya
- 2 in Mali

In 2017, ECHO Flight transported **26 100** passengers and **195** tons of cargo. The EU supports other humanitarian air service, such as UNHAS and MAF in crises contexts.

European Union support to humanitarian air services:

**€36 million** (incl. €16 million for ECHO flight) in 2017

**€34 million** (incl. €14 million for ECHO flight) in 2018

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## European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

### Humanitarian Air Services

#### What is it?

Humanitarian air services provide a lifeline for millions of people caught up in emergencies. When a crisis hits, fast and safe access to affected areas is vital to save lives. When there are no reliable roads, ports or commercial air strips, planes and helicopters are often the only way to access the field. In addition to transporting supplies and staff, humanitarian air services also carry out medical and security evacuations. The European Union operates its own ECHO Flight service and also funds other humanitarian air services that enable organisations to reach and help people in need.

#### Why is this important?

Humanitarian air services enable aid workers to access remote locations, bringing with them life-saving supplies for cut-off populations. They constitute a lifeline for millions of vulnerable people around the world. Natural disasters and man-made crises have left an unprecedented number of people in need of humanitarian assistance. Yet humanitarian operations are often hindered by logistical challenges and poor infrastructure.

Humanitarian agencies tend to rely on regular or charter flights, but local airlines are not always reliable and safe, nor do they necessarily fly to locations where humanitarian assistance is needed. Rough weather conditions can also make access to those in need challenging. During rainy seasons, cyclones or other natural disasters, already poor transport infrastructure becomes unusable. Bridges are swept away or destroyed and roads become impassable.

In many humanitarian crises, security and conflict pose another threat to poor transportation infrastructure. In such circumstances, transport over land is often too dangerous. Efficiently managed, reliable and safe air services become the best and sometimes only way to reach people in need. Humanitarian flights also evacuate aid workers for medical reasons or following security threats in times of disasters, epidemics or conflict.

## How are we helping?

In 2017, the European Union's contributions to humanitarian air services worldwide amounted to almost €36 million. In 2018, funding is around €33 million. The Commission runs its own air service, organises ad-hoc airlifts during major emergencies and co-finances the transport of relief material via the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.

In sub-Saharan Africa, the European Union operates a humanitarian air service known as ECHO Flight, with hubs in [Kenya](#), the [Democratic Republic of Congo](#) (DRC) - which also flies to Uganda - and [Mali](#). The service is free of charge for its humanitarian partners and aid organisations. With an estimated operating cost of over €16 million in 2017, ECHO Flight transported 26 100 passengers and 195 tons of cargo. After the mass influx of South Sudanese refugees into northern Uganda in 2016, ECHO Flight started offering ad-hoc flights to its partners working in the refugee camps in the West Nile area.

Following DRC's 9 and 10 outbreak of Ebola virus disease, declared in May and August 2018 respectively, ECHO flight transported personnel and equipment to various Ebola hot spots. On 1 August, the day the latest outbreak was declared in North Kivu province, the first of more than 38 flights took off to help a host of organisations access the affected areas in this conflict-torn part of DRC. A United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) helicopter was also funded to help the access to particularly insecure and hard-to-reach locations.

In addition to running its own fleet to and from insecure and remote zones, the EU funds UNHAS in Cameroon, the Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, Ethiopia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria Sudan, South Sudan and Yemen, and €730 000 to the Afghanistan operations of Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF).

The European Union also finances ad-hoc flights to support humanitarian operations during large-scale emergencies. In the past it contracted cargo aircraft to deliver life-saving aid to conflict-torn CAR, Ukraine; and to Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone during the Ebola outbreak from 2014 to 2016. Medical and security evacuations have been carried out from CAR and South Sudan at the height of the violence and from Ebola-affected countries.

Through the [EU Civil Protection Mechanism](#), the EU co-finances the transport of EU Member States' contributions to areas hit by crises or natural disasters. In recent years, relief items and medical supplies have been delivered via this mechanism to people in need in, among others, Chile, Dominica, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar, and Uganda.

**European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations** - B-1049 Brussels, Belgium - E-mail: [echo-info@ec.europa.eu](mailto:echo-info@ec.europa.eu)  
Website: <http://ec.europa.eu/echo> - Facebook: [@ec.humanitarian.aid](https://www.facebook.com/ec.humanitarian.aid) - Twitter: [@eu\\_echo](https://twitter.com/eu_echo) - Instagram: [@eu\\_echo](https://www.instagram.com/eu_echo)